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RADIO LIBERATION

AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR LIBERATION FROM BOLSHEVISM, INC.

NEW YORK PROGRAM SECTION

6-9186
"FREE PARLIAMENTS IN FREE SOCIETIES"

Interview with Representative Otto Krueger
of North Dakota

Radio Liberation, a democratic, anti-Communist station broadcasting to the Soviet Union in seventeen languages, is currently interviewing members of world's free legislative bodies on the general topic of "Free Parliaments in Free Societies".

The occasion for these interviews is the 50th anniversary of Russia's first parliament which falls on May 10, 1956. Despite its serious weaknesses, the State Duma gave Russia a taste of representative government. Today, the Duma is a symbol of the democratic heritage of a people who more than ever before are ripe for a democratic government.

April, 1956

This is Otto Krueger, a Member of the United States Congress from the State of North Dakota. I came to the United States in 1910. My folks had gone to Russia from Germany. My father was a professional miller and operated a flour mill in Russia, where I was born. It was in Volynskaya Gubernya, Zhitomirsky Ouezd, so close to Kievskaya Gubernya that my father often remarked that our rooster's crow was heard in two counties. After graduating from a Russian school, equivalent to a high school in this country, I was urged to enter a Military Academy. After passing the entrance examination, I refused to subscribe to the Oath of Allegiance to the Czar because I had changed my mind and intended to go to America.

I would like to point out that in 1906 a Constitutional Monarchy was established in Russia. Representatives from the various Provinces and Districts were elected and went to St. Petersburg, the capital. This representative body was the Duma Parliament. It looked to us at that time, that the moment arrived in Russia when the common people would have a choice in their own government. We hoped that this was the beginning of a democracy, but an uneasiness grew among the people. It was most evident among the students. Revolutionary pamphlets were circulated, and if you were caught with one of them in your possession it meant a one way trip to Siberia. Even under this Constitutional Government the right of free speech was limited. I soon found out that the advocates of the Revolution did not point the way to a free people. I wanted to be free. I could not see anything in the hatred, the distrust, the destruction, so I turned to the United States.

To learn the language, I, a grown man then, went to the grade schools. Everyone was willing to help, and they encouraged me, a stranger; and so it went through high school and to college. This was a land where anyone could progress if he wanted to. I became an American citizen as soon as the law of the land allowed it. I joined the American Army in World War I and saw combat in France and Belgium. I fought for this land, the land of my choice, the country that I had adopted. It was a good land. I learned what freedom was - I learned that it was worth fighting for. Because of my

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life in Russia, perhaps I appreciate this country more. I know what oppression means. I know what freedom means, and under this government I have enjoyed its privileges. I was only in this country 10 years before I was elected to public office. I was elected country auditor where I kept track of general business for an area of about 13,000 square miles in which 14,000 people resided. Later I was elected State Treasurer of my State as an insurance commissioner, and then was named Director of the Budget for the State. Then my people sent me to Washington D.C., as a representative, to help make laws for this country.

The people who selected me to represent them are from all walks of life; rich, poor, doctors, laborers, preachers, business men and farmers. They all have a free voice and an equal voice as to who should represent them. They could elect me, or they could elect anyone else. I feel honored that I was chosen. I feel that it is a privilege to be a part of this democracy and I am grateful that I live in a free land. I do not have to be afraid of those over me in government. I take the President of the United States as a friend, and as a great leader, but I do not always agree with him, and I am not banished or purged because I disagree. With other Congressmen it is the same. Here we have many different types of men, many shades of political thought, but we all have the same objective - to govern as best we know how, to keep our nation at peace with the world. By doing that, we let all the world know the blessings of peace --- a free life for our children and grandchildren so that they can live and worship as they wish. Because I came here from Russia as an immigrant boy, because I have been honored by the people of my state, I feel I know the wishes of our people. I want you to believe me when I say - we want the world to be free and particularly the Russian people. We helped Russia in two wars with the hope that we could help you again to liberty and to freedom, to the opportunities that we enjoy in the United States.

You may hear through propaganda channels that we are a nation of war mongers,

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a nation of ambitious capitalists; that in the United States people are abused and mistreated. From my 46 years of life in this country, from the opportunities that have been given me and the honor that comes to me from the position I hold in government, I know these statements are false. I know that in truth and in understanding among all peoples lies the hope of freedom for all mankind.

(Friedberg in Russian) Thank you very much, Congressman Krueger. And now permit me to ask you a few questions, with the help of my colleague, Mr. Macy. - Cong. Krueger, you were born in Russia. Do you still have relatives in Russia? (C. Krueger) I have a brother and a sister in Siberia. (in Russian)

MACY: Mr. Congressman, in the House of Representatives, you have been a member of the Appropriation Committee which handles the budget. Can you tell us; can the Federal law enforcement agencies and the Federal Army, and even the President of the United States, President Eisenhower, personally --- can they expend funds which have not been approved by the Congress?

KRUEGER: Definitely not. All appropriations are originated in the House of Representatives of the Congress, and we appropriate and designate the salaries and the pay of every public official, Army, Navy - even the president himself. We set his salary definitely.

FRIEDBERG: Is it possible for the Government of the U.S. to decide arbitrarily, to increase the Army and to spend more money on the Army, without the approval of the Congress?

KRUEGER: The Congress must first approve the size of the Army, Navy and any other defense program.

MACY: How often does the Congress approve the Budget for the Executive Branch of the Government?

KRUEGER: Every year.

MACY: And is this worked out in the Appropriations Committee?

KRUEGER: It is first submitted to the Budget Bureau. After it is approved by the Budget Bureau, the Budget Director brings the matter to the attention of the Congress and we

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pass on it after that. We either increase it or decrease it - whichever we see fit.

FRIEDBERG: Were you appointed to this committee by the President of the United States or were you elected?

KRUEGER: You know that our government, or our Congress, is made up of two parties - Republican and Democrat. I am a Republican from North Dakota, as I told you before --- and the Republicans designate the membership of each committee, that is to say, the leadership of the Republican Party as well as the Democratic Party.

MACY: Are there any Democrats on the Committees when the Republicans have a majority?

KRUEGER: Let me say this, that the Appropriations Committee is a large committee, consisting of 50 members. The party in power at the present time - the Democrats - have 30 members on this committee, and the minority party, the Republicans, have 20 members. The members who are to serve on this committee are selected by each party.

MACY: Sometimes the Soviet Government has said that there is no difference between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party in the United States. Do you believe this is true?

KRUEGER: This is absolutely true when it comes to Americanism. We are all American, and we certainly are for America first, but there are a lot of differences of opinion in the Republican Party as well as in the Democratic Party. But on the major issues, particularly the foreign issues, we are pretty much alike.

FRIEDBERG: You must have read in the newspaper, Congressman, that now, a few years after Stalin died, Stalin himself and many of the things he stood for, are condemned by the Soviet leaders. We know that in Soviet Russia the man who is in power at any given time, purges and condemns anybody who was before him. What would happen if, as a result of the next election, the Republicans were back in Congress? What would happen to all the Democrats?

KRUEGER: Well, the Democrats are a very integral part of our government and they still would be recognized. There would be no purges of any kind. The people make their choice

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and whomever they send here serves them.

MACY: Congressman, do you think that it makes for a more effective and liberal democracy to have two parties instead of one?

KRUEGER: I definitely believe that is true.

MACY: What is the advantage of a two party system?

KRUEGER: Well, it seems that if one party is in power too long, even if we have two parties, it becomes rather careless, and does not answer to the peoples' problems as readily as if we had a change in party government.

FRIEDBERG: And what do you think would happen if we had only one party? If only one party were allowed to exist altogether?

KRUEGER: Well, you are taking me into a sphere of Communism now. It is one party. Now they have elections, as I understand, in Russia, but only one party, and you must vote --- if you vote at all ---- for the man designated by the powers that be.

MACY: Do you think a two party system could develop in Russia if there were conditions of freedom?

KRUEGER: If there were conditions of freedom, no doubt, there would be more than two parties that would spring up, like there are in France and in other countries. We firmly believe in a 2-power system in our country, and I think that a 2-power system is the best form of government.

FRIEDBERG: Do you believe that the Russian people, and I mean the people not the government, sincerely desire peace and friendship with the people of the United States?

KRUEGER: I don't believe that the people of Russia have changed since 1910 when I left there. And the people as a whole, (I came from the Ukraine, I know the Ukrainian people are fine people and they are peace loving people) I think love peace now, as much, or probably more so, than they ever did, and we are only too willing to help them from this side.

FRIEDBERG: In other words, you would draw a sharp line of distinction between the present

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Communist dictatorship in Russia and the peoples of Russia.

KRUEGER: Oh, definitely so.

MACY: Can you see any reason why the peoples in Russia are unequipped to manage their own political affairs?

KRUEGER: I think if they were given the freedom of choice --- they would perfect a good government. They are subdued now and they can't help themselves. Anyone, as I understand it now, that rises against Communism is condemned to death.

FRIEDBERG: In other words, you think that the people who 50 years ago, when the degree of literacy was low and when Russia was a backward country, could still create an imperfect but nevertheless parliamentary institution such as the State Duma, could, if given the necessary conditions, create a free parliamentary system.

KRUEGER: I definitely have a lot of faith in the Russian people and I think they could come up with a fairly good government - probably not perfect to begin with but they would improve as time goes on.

MACY: Did there seem to be a real desire on the part of the Ukrainians and Russians, that you knew when you were a boy living in that area, to participate in the affairs of the government through the Duma, the first parliament?

KRUEGER: Well, the Duma was created, as I told you before, in 1906, right after the Russian-Japanese War, and it was a new thing; but everywhere there seemed to be hope and expectation of better things to come when the Constitutional Monarchy was declared, and the Duma was established.

FRIEDBERG: Do you think that a free interchange of people, and I mean people -- not government officials, government delegations, would contribute to the cause of development of democratic institutions in Russia?

KRUEGER: Oh, I believe it would help a great deal, but I wouldn't want to select a bunch of the Communists to come here - they wouldn't take back to their people what we want the people in Russia to know.